562 431 643 groom) who has served his naba satisfactorily receives, at the time he is freed, a young girl who may be nubile, but who may, on the other hand, be just a small child.

In either case, the former servitor is required to call upon the naba from time to time and to take him gifts (cowries or roosters). If the girl is still living with her relatives, in addition to his trifling presents to the naba, the fiancé may make a few presents to his in-laws, although it is not obligatory.

562 643 644 858 Pogsiouré. The first daughter born of a marriage between a Moaga subject (former servitor, son, brother, or uncle of the naba, etc.) and the woman given to him [166] by the naba becomes the "property" of the latter with full rights over her. She is known as "the daughter of the pogsiouré" and is fated to become pogsiouré in her turn.

643 644 858 357 If the first-born is a boy, the naba may bring him to his court as soon as he reaches the age of discretion to make him either a sogoné or a samand'biga, and the child's father cannot make the slightest objection.

This does not imply that under Mossi law the sogoné and samand'kamba must be children of the pogsiouré. As absolute master of all his subjects, the naba can recruit his servitors throughout his domain as he needs them, with no opposition by the Mossi to this recruitment.

644 858 562 The fate of the daughters of the pogsiouré. The girls are taken from their relatives as soon as they are old enough to work and are entrusted by the naba to his own wives.

The latter, for all practical purposes, become the adoptive mothers of these children and, as such, see to their food and clothing. This does not prevent the real mother from bringing cowries and clothing to her daughter, and to make sure that the child will be well treated by the napagha (wife of the naba), she sometimes [431] even brings the latter a gift of kalgo (soumbala) or karite butter (kamé).

[584] When the girls reach puberty, the naba chooses the most attractive for his fiancées, and the [167] others are given to some of his administrators or to his own relatives.

644 357 608 for example), and in return the adoptive mother gives him a bit of food, over and above his regular ration.

644 357 [169] In view of these circumstances, those who are not required at the home of the naba to care for the horses or for some special service spend half the year with their relatives.

644 357 565 It is perhaps of interest to point out that the samand'kamba are mostly sons of the chiefs of villages of nabissi (sons of naba), sons of nakomsé (descendants of naba and nabissi), and sometimes even sons of canton chiefs at the court of the Mogho Naba. There is also the child of the ordinary Moaga, who was not made a sogoné because he was not thought worthy of the position. The rigorous discipline required of the former young men teaches them "to suffer in order to be able to command."

644 357 Anticipation of freedom. If the sogoné or samand'biga is the eldest son and is old enough to marry at the time of his father's death, the naba is required to free him, even though the period of obligatory service has not been completed.

643 844 584 Another custom, the zan-boko. There is another curious custom among the Mossi. If during the course of his journeys the naba stops in a village and during his stay a girl is born to a local Mossi woman, the child is his, with full rights, if he has been told of the birth.

However, the naba often knows nothing about the event, and the father takes care not to speak of it and then makes whatever disposition of the child he wishes.

844 584 [170] This custom, however, is practiced to its fullest extent between Mossi. A Moaga sana (stranger) passing through the village is invited by the elders to dig the zan-boko (hole in which the placenta must be buried). This is his zounogo, "opportunity." He gives a few cowries (100 to 200) to the head of the family and becomes the fiancé of the baby girl. Later on, when she reaches puberty, the man will make the customary gifts to the parents, and nothing will stand in the way of the marriage.

[171] Chapter 11

Marriage, Birth, and Death

Marriage

000 In this chapter we shall review all aspects of marriage throughout Mossi country. The customs are the same everywhere, ranging from the marriage of girls reared in the household of the naba to the institution of concubinage. We shall first deal with the most common forms of marriage, then discuss the matter of bride price, and finally conclude with a discussion of the social status of the Moaga woman.

582 Girls are married between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. With certain rare exceptions, a girl of sixteen or eighteen is never sent to her husband. Such an age is considered very unfavorable [843] for child-bearing, and it is even thought that children whose mothers are too young will not survive.

Young men marry between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. [172]

562 Marriage of a girl reared in the household of a naba. Girls born 584 of the marriage of a woman given to a former servitor by either province or canton chiefs became by right the property of the latter. These girls are taken from their parents when they are old enough to do some work and are entrusted by the naba to his wives. They are henceforth regarded as betrothed to the naba and are obliged to submit to all of the conditions of servitude which are imposed on the other wives.

When they reach marriageable age, they may be given, without either their own or their parents' consent, to freed servitors or to any individual who may have rendered some service to the naba.

This is the first type of forced marriage.

Marriage of a girl given by her parents. Since the girl is regarded as simply a "thing," a being without volition, she may be promised at birth. Very often gratitude for hospitality or the existence of an old debt is sufficient reason for promising a daughter.

562 When the girl reaches marriageable age, she usually finds herself
584 with a husband who is sometimes older than her father and whom she cannot possibly love. She must go to him, however, since such is her father's will.

[173] The fiancé brings some gifts (cowries, chickens, millet
[431 beer) and claims his wife. The girl is sent off to her husband's home
585] with no ceremony being performed.

This second type of forced marriage has the parents' consent.

587 Marriage by inheritance. When the head of a household dies, the
428 women, who are considered a part of his estate, are divided up just as is the rest of the property. They are apportioned to the sons of
562 the deceased, or his brothers if the sons are not of marriageable age.
768 However, unlike the procedure for a chief's estate, in which the wife is just a "thing," these wives may choose their husbands from among the members of the family.

This is semi-free marriage.

587 Besides the type of marriage which we shall later call "free marriage" -- a form which occurs very frequently since it includes the marriages of loose women who may have as many as nine husbands, only stopping at the last one because of old age -- there is also remarriage due to successive widowhoods. Some women are so
[177] unlucky as to lose [174] a succession of husbands.. They are finally avoided like the plague since they have the reputation of being cursed by the gods (Mossi, kombwinga; Bambara, térédiougou).

584 Marriage after a conventional proposal. When a young man wishes to ask for the hand of a young girl who is not yet engaged, he chooses as his go-between a person who is on good terms with the elders of the girl's village. If the response is favorable, the young man brings a chicken, a secco (dagnopinri) [coarse matting] to close the doorway, and some fagots. He goes back to his village and returns at intervals bearing sprouted millet or millet beer and a chicken for the head of the family. The latter at last tells the go-between: "Tell X... that we accept him as our son and that we shall try to give him satisfaction as soon as possible."

Some time later the young man returns once more with a chicken, sprouted millet, or beer for the elders of the village. He makes

584 visits and presents a few small gifts. This state of affairs goes on for one or several years. Finally the head of the family calls together his little council and makes known his intention of giving So-and-So's daughter to X... from such-and-such village. There is seldom a refusal since he has sole authority to give the girls in marriage. The young man is then sent to make the acquaintance of his prospective in-laws. As soon as he is presented, he makes a small gift (usually [175] 100 to 1,000 cowries are given).

If the girl is the oldest daughter, her fiancé is expected to bring a sheep, a hoe, a guinea hen, and some beer.

585 The young man is then told the date on which he may send for his fiancée. He has nothing further to do, except to make some preparations and to wait. When the girl is brought to him, he kills some chickens and a goat if he has one, and he has food prepared for the girl's escort. He must also give cowries to them, the amount depending on his own resources.

In many villages the girls married in this way never leave their husbands for fear of being cursed by their parents and condemned never to see their native villages again.

574 851 Finally, if the wife gives birth, the husband sends a chicken to the village elder and the wife goes there to visit.

787 584 Girls who are hostile to a husband. These are girls whom the soothsayers point out as hostile to a husband.

Although these girls are promised at an early age, just like other girls, they must not know that they are engaged, and if their fiancés should by chance come to visit, they are treated like ordinary guests who have just happened by.

583 When such a girl reaches seventeen, her fiancé arranges with her family to send her to the waterhole, the well, or the nearest market.

[176] The fiancé selects a group of his strongest friends, plies them with beer, and sends them off with instructions to abduct his fiancée on the way. The latter, accompanied by a woman or by other girls, is surrounded unexpectedly and seized by strong arms despite the resistance, often quite vigorous, of her brothers or her companions. She is then taken to the home of her husband.

A few days later some people are designated to take the girl's effects to her husband's home and to receive the traditional gifts.

583 to the sort of concubinage that "free marriage" is, as practiced in Mossi country.

The Situation of the Betrothed Couple during the Engagement

●584 Generally speaking, the fiancé is supposed to avoid his betrothed before marriage. They treat each other with a kind of shy reserve.

Aside from the gifts made to the village elders and some cowries given to the future in-laws at the time of his first visit, no further demands are made on the fiancé.

584 684 The young man is formally forbidden to carry on an intrigue with a woman in the girl's village. If he does so, not only may the engagement be broken, but the lover may never again set foot in the village on paid of death.

Breaking the Engagement

584 When an engagement is broken, the gifts received need not be returned. On the other hand, the death of the girl is not regarded as breaking the engagement; the family must, sooner or later, offer another daughter to the young man to replace the girl who died.

An engagement may be broken [179] automatically in case of adultery, discussed below, or in the event of a quarrel between the two families.

Marriage Between First Cousins

587 Marriage between first cousins is not allowed. There can be no valid union between the children of a brother and sister, between a man and the daughter of either his father's or his mother's brother.

588 587 751 However, it sometimes happens -- inadvertently -- that a girl who has been given in marriage in a very distant village may find that her husband is a descendant of a great-grandparent (material or paternal) in the same family as her own. Had this been known, the marriage would not have taken place. Ordinarily, distant relationship is not discovered until long after the marriage, after complicated genealogical research. In that case, one of the pair, usually the wife,

588 582 751 wears a bracelet made of copper and iron intertwined, kalembanga, which is believed to protect the wearer against any disaster due to the technically illegal marriage. The kalembanga is also believed to protect the children born of the union from sudden death.

Polygyny

595 Polygyny is the rule throughout Mossi country. It is true that the number of wives varies with the resources and position of the individual. Mere heads of compounds who are somewhat well off may have [180] from five to eight wives and numerous fiancées. The [584] latter are usually reserved for the dakompa (older sons and younger brothers of the head of the family), assuming that these men will in turn render real service and be completely devoted to the head of the household.

There are many reasons for the practice of polygyny, but the main one is procreation. The under-nourished natives must rely on [853 134] the mother's milk to feed their babies and must therefore wait two or even three years before resuming sexual relations with a wife who is a nursing mother. Therefore, they prefer to have several wives.

Consummation

585 When the young girl is taken to her husband, she is entrusted to a woman whom she will henceforth treat as "mother."

A few days after the departure of the cortege, whose composition we shall describe presently, the man claims his fiancée. She is taken at night to the nuptial hut, which has no special features, and no one is present at the consummation of the marriage. In this respect the Mossi differ from the Bambara, who have a griot or an old woman accompany the couple to help the young man, if necessary, overcome the girl's resistance.

It goes without saying that if the girl is found to be a virgin, the [181] husband is overjoyed. If she is not a virgin, the love which he may have felt for her before possessing her is much diminished. The man shows the girl his anger, certain that she will at least tell her mother about it.

177 The preceding pages deal wholly with past history. The French occupation has profoundly modified the whole administrative set-up and curtailed the rights of nabas, who are now mere civil servants. The people are slowly learning not to fear them; their authority is weakening; the gifts dwindle; and the nabas have been put on short allowance and forced to cultivate their fields like everybody else. Their judicial power is practically gone, and those few who have preserved real authority were able to do so because of their remoteness from administrative centers and their past. They were in charge before the French occupation, and they have managed to keep up their prestige in spite of everything. Yet little by little attitudes 500 change and respect vanishes. Is this good? Is it bad? The matter could be argued at great length. Although this administrative system led to regrettable abuses which had to be checked, it also had its favorable aspects, and it made the Mossi into one of the most feared and most homogeneous peoples in the bend of the Niger.

/28/ BOOK II. FAMILY LIFE

Chapter 1. Establishment of the Family Through Marriage

562 The family is established through marriage. We shall, therefore, ●584 first study the marriage bond. Obviously, since Christianity was 567 introduced in the country only a short time ago, virginity is unknown there even as a concept. Every nubile girl must marry. She is given in marriage by the person to whom she belongs, and her own tastes are not taken into account. She belongs primarily to her father, but sometimes even before her birth she belongs to the person who gave her mother away on the condition — a common clause in free marriage contracts — that the first girl she bears will be given in marriage by her grandfather. Or the woman may belong to her father's master, and this may be her father's only remaining obligation toward the man who formerly owned him as a slave. Thus, nearly all girls born in Koupéla belong by right to the naba, for the inhabitants of this locality were formerly his slaves. Sometimes a

562 girl is used to pay debts; a man borrows on the promise of giving his
584 daughter in marriage. She will be handed over, often with no bride
567 price other than the borrowed sum; and, contrary to the custom noted above, since she is considered a slave, her first daughter does not belong to the grandfather. A girl may also be given in exchange for her enslaved brother or uncle, who thus recovers his freedom. A man may be seriously ill and call a doctor who agrees to treat him on the condition that the patient's daughter be given to him if he gets well. The father does recover, and the girl is given in marriage to the fortunate doctor. Exchange of daughters also takes place: a native may give his daughter in marriage to another, who in turn gives him his own.

562 A girl is given in marriage by her mother only if she was born out
584 of wedlock, and her father is thus theoretically unknown. The sisters
548 of certain nabas are the only ones permitted to choose their husbands
[554] according to their own wishes and to leave them when they please.
593 The fickle existence they lead is easy to imagine! In all other cases the girl is given in marriage by her father, or by his heir if the father is dead. (1) The mother is not consulted, but since she cares for the

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1. It would be onerous and indeed impossible to list all the various situations that may arise. The sorcerers quite often interfere, and who knows what goes through a sorcerer's mind! One case among many: a woman bore a daughter after raising several others who died immediately following marriage; the father consulted the sorcerer to find out whether he should promise this last daughter in marriage. The sorcerer stated that she must be left free to choose her own husband, or else she would die like her sisters. The father left her free.

daughter until the latter marries, she may through advice, promises, or even threats dissuade her from a certain match /29/ or welcome her if she runs away from a husband to whom she was given against her will.

584 If the girl absolutely refuses to go to her betrothed, her father
[562] tries to persuade her but does not use force. If the girl persists in her refusal in spite of everything — this is extremely rare — the father returns to the betrothed any money he may have borrowed, but he does not return anything that was given him spontaneously. If the father happens to die after he has pledged his daughter, his heir may not retract the promise and give his sister or niece to another man,
[428] but he will from then on receive the gifts himself. If the betrothed man dies, his heir gets the girl promised to the father, with the condition that he will continue to pay the bride price.

584 Contrary to the situation in European countries, the woman, con-
583 sidered as valuable property, is paid for; it is not she who brings a dowry, but the man who wants her as his wife. If a man has an eye on a friend's daughter, he goes to visit the father even though the girl may still be a babe in arms. He is careful not to state what he has in mind. He comes sometimes with a few cowries, sometimes with a chicken, a piece of salt, perhaps even a sheep. The child's father understands, and when he has some work to be done, a field to be weeded, millet to be threshed, huts to be roofed, he makes it known to the suitor, who hastens to work for the man whose son-in-law he should like to become.

After a time, the father says to the suitor: "You have treated me well. I am pleased with you. I will treat you well." The suitor understands and becomes even more assiduous. He sends his friends; and on every festive occasion he presents the father of his intended with a few chickens. There is no outright promise, no betrothal in the usual sense of the term. Sometimes the father has financial difficulties, pressing debts, or he has seen a fine garment he should like to buy, and he has a request for money conveyed to his friend. The latter knows that he is loaning without return, or rather loaning against the girl. He refuses only if he is actually unable to furnish the sum; for if negotiations were ever to be broken, the child's father would have to return the money advanced, and this would greatly embarrass him and thus prevent him from profiting through the transaction. In any case, it is extremely rare for a promised girl not to be given to the man who has made the first advances and who has been favorably received. A father who should promise his daughter to a man after receiving gifts for some time from another would be held in very poor esteem and forced to return any money he might

584
583 have borrowed. In addition, he would expose himself and the preferred suitor to the vengeance of the rejected one.

583 The bride price is not exorbitant. The total gifts, spread over a period of years, amount to some fifty francs, without counting the work days. Nevertheless, it requires sufficient means to secure at least the necessary cowries. Besides, the child's father prefers to give her to someone who already boasts a certain fame and some wealth, in short, to an elderly man. /30/ This is why children are promised to old dotards, and white-haired men are paired with young girls; while the old men's sons of marriageable age cannot get wives. If the father has the means to pay the bride price, he carefully refrains from helping his son, even if the latter has found a match to his liking.

587 It is true that all the father's wives are inherited by the oldest son,
578 who gives some to his younger brothers; but this occurs only at the
593 old man's death, and this may not happen for a long time. This explains why the oldest son wishes for his father's death, and why the father sends the son away for fear of a premature end. It is only fair to add that some men, with a better understanding of their own interests, marry off their sons as soon as they are old enough.

595 Polygamy exists among the Mossi as in all Black countries. The
[556] wealth of a man is gauged by the number of his wives. Women furnish hands to till the soil, for the wife works in the fields like the husband. Women also furnish children, and if these are daughters, young men will come to offer their services (dakonré) and one day take the girls in marriage; or the father will receive gifts. If the children are boys, they will later aid the father in his work. In these countries where each lives for himself alone, where selfishness reigns supreme, polygamy is easily explained, but it undoubtedly results in a lower birth rate. White-bearded old men cannot have children as numerous and sound as young men in their prime, and the latter, deprived of wives, wear themselves out with their excesses. It is true that those who can afford a dozen wives are few; most have to be content with two, three, or four. Some nabas, nevertheless, own veritable herds of women, and this is certainly a grievous abuse. Their wives are numbered in the hundreds. The greatest moral disorder reigns in those harems, where the boys who serve as grooms and pages spend most of their time among their master's wives. This explains the precautions taken by the women's owners and the eunuchs of the Moro Naba, as well as the Poẽnaba and his sinister duties.

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582 Marriage is exogamous, that is, relatives do not marry if their
564 kinship is known. There are no sharply defined caste lines. The Mossi marry Yarsé Malinké, Bousanse, and Gourounsi, but cannot marry Peul nor Haoussa. A Mossi who does not belong to a caste may choose his wife among Mossi who do belong to one. The latter do not intermarry freely; iron workers cannot marry from among the drummers.

584 But to go back to our story. The girl has grown. The suitor has already made numerous gifts. In short, the time has come to proceed with the wedding. The girl's father /31/ summons the betrothed and tells him: "Come and see me on such-and-such a day with a chicken." The suitor joyfully returns to his village and tells the elders that he was told to bring a chicken. On the day set, the suitor takes the bird to the girl's family, accompanied by his friends. He hands over the chicken, and everyone goes to the home of the head of the family, or, in his absence, to a village elder. The father states before all present that he wishes to give his daughter to So-and-So. Congratulations are exchanged, and everyone goes home. Now the festivities must be arranged, the relatives and friends must be notified, and the millet beer must be brewed. Meanwhile, the relatives and friends who have heard the good news come to greet the bridegroom and bring him fifty or a hundred cowries to help him meet the expenses of the festivities.

When everything is ready, the bridegroom takes 500 cowries and a rooster to the girl's father and 500 cowries to the elder in whose household the bride shall live until her wedding day. The girl's relatives have prepared dinner, while the bridegroom provides the
[302] drink. A relative of the groom shaves the bride's forehead in a circle, and she retires to the inner courtyard where her father's wives wash her thoroughly and tie a cotton cord around her waist. She dons a white garment and goes to offer a gourd of beer to her betrothed who has remained outside with his friends. Everyone thanks the girl's parents and then they all leave. On the day after next, the groom
[431] sends his friends to greet the family of his betrothed with a basket of millet flour, four kalro pellets, and salt, which are all distributed among the village people. These festivities, with their attendant ceremonies, come closest to a formal betrothal.

585 The girl, however, remains with the head of the family or with the elder who takes his place! When all these preliminary ceremonies are over, the groom sends daily for his bride. Once the trousseau has

584 To arrange a marriage, one offers gifts to the girl's family on
596 festive days. The gift grows more sizable from year to year. Finally, at the time of marriage, one offers 25 or 30 francs as a bride price.

Girls are also exchanged among families. /545/ One family may pledge one of its daughters to another family for one of its young men, while the second family provides a girl for a boy of the first family.

Even if a man buys a wife at market and has children by her, it is not he but his family head who gives those children in marriage.

If a young man goes himself to a family head, asks for a wife, and obtains her without any payment, without any bride price, it is the girl's father who disposes of the first daughter born of the union. He is entitled to take her with him as soon as she is no longer at the breast, and he will later give her in marriage. The other children are given in marriage by their father's family head.

596 4. The head of the family performs religious sacrifices for the
782 whole family, and acts as its judge.

5. When a family head dies, the headship of the family goes
596 to his younger brother along with the family property, that is,
428 his soukala if it is a family one (built by the family or with the help of the family), the available family fields, the movable family property (livestock, slaves, cowries, clothing, family jewels, etc.). The movable private property of the deceased, on the other hand (livestock, slaves, cowries, clothing, private jewels, etc.) go to the oldest son along with the fields cultivated by the deceased and by his household, that is, the private property of the deceased. Finally, the soukala, if it was built by the deceased all by himself and without the aid of his family, goes to his oldest son as well since it is private property.

The brother who inherits gives some of the movable family property to the other brothers, but only if he feels like doing so.

Here, family property is by far the most important.

Such is the oldest variant of the Mossi family type that prevails at the present day. Actually, this variant still persists in quite a few Mossi localities.

592 Now, here is the second variant:
596 1. Every household lives separately, works separately (except for the clearing of the family fields), and sees to its own subsistence.

592 People who are thus settled on their own work for themselves and no
596 longer for /546/ their father, with whom they lived and for whom they worked prior to marriage. They nevertheless offer gifts to their father from time to time.

592 2. As far as the marriage of children belonging to those house-
596 holds is concerned, a distinction must be made among the following
584 possibilities. When they are the children of wives bought by the family head, it is the latter who gives them in marriage. When they are the children of wives obtained by the husband himself, it is the latter who gives them in marriage.

Or else a rough compromise is made (in Boussouma province, for example). The first son and first daughter of the union are given in marriage by the family head, while the other children are given in marriage by the household.

596 3. It is the head of the family, however, who alone is entitled
782 to offer religious sacrifices for the whole family, and who always acts as its judge.

596 4. When the head of the family dies, the headship is trans-
428 mitted to his younger brother along with the family property. The private property of the deceased goes to all his sons, but the oldest son is favored. This actually constitutes the difference between this family type and the preceding one as far as inheritance is concerned. While in the preceding type the oldest son alone inherited, in this type all sons inherit but the eldest is heavily favored.

Thus, if the soukala was the private property of the deceased, it goes to the eldest son. If he is able to cultivate them all, the latter also keeps all the fields cultivated by the deceased. If he is not able to do so, he gives the surplus to his brothers.

As for livestock, if there are ten head that belonged privately to the deceased, and if there are three sons and two daughters, the oldest son will get four, each other son will get two, and each daughter will get one.

[567] As for slaves, if the situation is the same, the oldest son will take five out of ten, the second son three, the third son two, and the daughters will get none.

Cowries and grain are apportioned in the same manner.

In addition to these shares given to the younger sons and to the daughters, it must be noted that private property has acquired greater

596 with the help of his father and family head (which is by far the
423 most frequent occurrence), /548/ while in such a case it had for-
178 merly been considered family property. Finally, the soukala came to be regarded in every case as personal property and to be transmitted for that reason to the oldest son. This, incidentally, is the same evolution that applied to property in general, as we shall see shortly.

593 Now, here is the third and last variant of the prevailing Mossi family type. Nowadays, this variant is by far the most widespread.

1. Every household lives separately, works separately, and procures its own food and subsistence. The help of neighbors is enlisted to clear the fields.

584 2. Every household gives its own children in marriage. The family head no longer does so.

593 As soon as a man has a son, he chooses a little girl who will go to the boy when he reaches puberty. He visits the girl's relatives from time to time and offers them gifts.

584 When the girl is old enough to be married, he takes 50,000
583 cowries (if he is wealthy), skirt cloths, salt, kola nuts, and gives it
593 all to the relatives. Then, the old women in the daughter's family lead her to the home of the betrothed man's relatives. The father kills a sheep, makes a lot of couscous, buys dolo to celebrate her arrival. Then he offers the girl six or seven baskets containing respectively 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 cowries. The young man himself gives his betrothed four or five skirts. If he is very wealthy, he gives her one or two little girls as slaves.

585 On the evening when the wedding is celebrated, the father asks
[426] one of his neighbors to lend him a hut, and the young married pair are sent there all alone (they will remain there as long as their soukala is not built). On the morrow, the feasting begins. People dance and feast for seven days at the gates of the father's soukala, at least when the girl is a virgin. If she is not, the feasting is curtailed but nevertheless lasts for another three days.

583 When the father is poor, he offers a few kola nuts to the girl's
591 /549/ father (six or ten). He gives the father and mother some firewood he gathered in the bush, straw to make séko /Tr.: mats/ for door, 2,000 cowries, a skirt cloth. He kills a sheep to make

592 1. Husband.
2. Wife or wives.
3. Unmarried children, sons or daughters.
4. Slaves.

Sometimes, it also includes young unmarried brothers (see above).

592 As a rule, every soukala-household has only one large bush
24 field in addition to the garden plot surrounding the soukala (where
461 maize and large red millet are grown during the rainy season, tobacco and cotton during the dry season).

The head of the household, his unmarried sons and unmarried brothers, work on those fields during the rainy season from six in the morning to three in the afternoon, with a long rest period around noon. The women work there also, but their hours are different owing to their household tasks.

The unmarried sons and brothers also have small individual plots of cotton and large red millet. They work them in the afternoon after three o'clock. During the rainy season, as a rule, there are no rest days. A few Mossi, however, have adopted the customs [527] of their Yarsé neighbors and rest on Friday. Others, who are Moslemized, and incidentally very few, rest both on Friday and on Monday.

During the dry season the members of the household repair hut roofs, go hunting, or else participate in the clearing of family fields, etc. In addition to this they work for themselves, as weavers for example. The money earned in this fashion goes to them and not to the soukala head.

/556/ It is the head of the soukala-household, the husband
592 and father, who provides all occupants of the soukala with food throughout the year, morning and evening. He also provides clothing for those who cannot provide their own, but those who can do so procure it themselves.

592 We know that it is sometimes the head of the family and some-
584 times the head of the household who gives the children of the household in marriage. It sometimes happens, however, that a son
464 leaves the soukala without his father's permission. He usually does
565 this in order to win a wife, when the head of the family or the

592 father cannot procure one or delays too long in doing so. The son
587 who secedes in this fashion goes to work for a chief or noble who
464 will later give him a wife as a reward. The first male child and the
565 first female child born of this union, however, will devolve to the chief or noble who gave the wife. He will use the male child as a servant, and the girl to be handed out as a reward to someone working for him. This is a side effect of the political organization on the family. This secession on the part of sons can only occur, indeed, thanks to the existence of chiefs and nobles in sufficient numbers to permit the secessionists to find work and employment among them without difficulty. Among the Bobo and Nounouma, such a situation could not exist.

Let us note that this institution, while restricting the authority of the family head or household head, has strengthened the power of the Mossi aristocracy.

592 In closing, let us note a few details about the Mossi soukala
361 from a physical standpoint. It is a cluster of round huts, about five or six of them, usually built of red earth with a straw roof and connected to each other by a concave wall made likewise of red earth. The soukala is thus fortified, as it were, and sheltered from the outside.

592 The Mossi soukala is quite similar to the Malinké or Dialonké
361 "compound" /literally, "square"/, which also consists of a cluster
171 of clay huts with straw roofs. Among the Malinké and Dialonké, however, the huts are often connected by a palisade or a mere séko instead of a red earth wall as they are here. Another difference is /557/ that the doors of the huts of the Mossi soukala are so low that one must often creep in on all fours. Furthermore, there are no porches such as are found among the Malinké and Dialonké. In spite of those differences, however, the Mossi soukala bear a general resemblance to the Guinean soukala, while they are in no way related to the massive citadels of the Gourounsi and Kipirsi.

The Mossi soukala, on the other hand, are set about 50 meters apart. The maize plot surrounding the soukala lies directly around it, as among the Bobo, Gourounsi, Kipirsi, etc., while among the Malinké and Dialonké of Guinea the garden plot of each compound is located outside the village boundaries, since the compounds stand

000 12. Women's property.
13. Adultery.
14. Divorce.
15. Formalities of divorce.
16. Consequences of divorce. /235/
17. Psychology of women. The woman as lover and mother.

584 First, let us study the promise of marriage.

Promise of marriage. —"It is customary," says Vadier, "for a father to present his son with a first wife. It is the father who takes the first steps and offers the first required gifts. If the son is at least 17 or 18 years old, however, or if he is already married, he fulfills the necessary obligations himself.

"In practice the son always consults his father and marries a woman he has chosen only after he has obtained paternal consent. In theory, the consent of the father is not necessary to validate the marriage. If the son fails to obtain his father's permission, however, the latter drives him out of his soukala (compound), but the marriage nevertheless goes fully into effect.

"The marriage proposal is made without consideration of the girl's age. She is usually six or seven years old when she is asked for, but it frequently happens that she is still at her mother's breast when she is promised to a man. We can see, therefore, that a long period of time inevitably elapses between the marriage proposal and the marriage itself.

"Let us study first those formalities which attend a marriage proposal.

"The Mossi who has an eye on a young girl, either for himself or for his son, pays a visit to the head of the child's family and, according to his means, offers him a gift of a chicken, a mat, a small amount of salt, or merely a bundle of firewood. He makes known to him the object of his visit, taking great care not to mention the name of the young girl he wants. Regarding this, he was careful previously to send a mutual friend to the head of the family, to notify him of the approaching visit and to point out the name of the girl who would be asked for. The head of the family, if he does not wish to comply with this request, declares that he has no daughter to give in marriage. On the other hand, if he agrees, he tells the suitor to return at a later date, which he sets and at which time he will pledge the young girl to him. The suitor returns on the appointed day with several friends

584 bearing dolo /millet beer/; they will serve as witnesses. In their presence, the head of the family mentions by name to the suitor the girl he is granting to him and who will be delivered to him as a wife later when she is old enough to take a husband.

"Then the betrothed man with the friends he brought goes to visit every soukala head in the village, greets them in accordance with Mossi custom, and announces to them that such-and-such a family head has promised him a young girl in marriage. The whole village is thus made witnesses."

Persons whose consent is required to validate a promise of marriage.

562 —"The consent of the young girl," says Vadier, "is by no means required. In fact, she is disposed of without being consulted, and she is always forced to become the wife of the man to whom she has been promised, except if her future husband is a leper or blind. The /236/ young girl is actually supposed to be unacquainted with the name of her prospective husband until she is taken to him.

"To validate the marriage, the following people must express their consent.

"1. The future husband. His consent follows from the transactions undertaken by his father or by himself with the family of his future wife.

"2. The girl's father. When a Mossi has one or several daughters and when he thinks the moment has come for the head of the family to dispose of them, he tells the latter that he can promise them in marriage. In spite of his powers, the head of the family could not betroth a young girl unless her father had told him that he could give her in marriage.

"When he has chosen a husband, he goes to see the father of the girl and makes known to him the offer he has received. The father can accept or refuse as he sees fit. His consent is absolutely indispensable, and the head of the family cannot ignore it.

"The father cannot dispose of his daughter without the consent of the family head, except in circumstances we shall examine later.

584 596 "3. The head of the family. The consent of the head of the family is inevitably required, since it is he alone who has the power to promise the young girls of his family in marriage under the terms described above. Three cases where the consent of the family head is not indispensable are as follows: (1) when the father of the young girl is at odds with the head of the family, the father alone may dispose of his

584 daughter; (2) when the father is in extreme penury, he gives his still
596 unpromised daughter to some rich native who, with the customary gifts,
will help him in his need, since the gifts of the fiancé go to the man
who promised the young girl; (3) the first daughter in a household,
[603] whether or not she is the only daughter, must be promised by her
maternal grandfather and not by the head of the family."

This constitutes, I believe, a curious vestige of matriarchy which doubtless refers to those very distant times when the Mossi family revolved around the maternal rather than the paternal line.

4. The mother of the young girl. "The girl's mother," says Vadier, "is sometimes consulted. Her husband merely asks her if she is satisfied with the choice he has made in agreement with the head of the family. Her answer, however, is given no weight whatever.

"The fiancé's mother is not even consulted."

Such at least is the theory. In reality, no doubt, the mother of the young girl often has more authority than the theory supposes.

431 Gifts.—Bride price is nonexistent in Mossi marriage. This is a very
583 important point which differentiates the Mossi and even, I believe,
[71] the Voltaic /237/ tribes in general, from the Mandé groups, such as the Bambara and Malinké, where bride price does exist and is actually quite high (I say quite high, considering the general poverty of the Sudanese). I did not emphasize this sufficiently in my Noir du Soudan in the chapter concerning the Mossi family, pages 548 and 549. I did mention that the price paid to win a Mossi girl of the Ouagadougou region ranged from 1, 500 cowries (1. 50 francs) to 50, 000 cowries (50 francs). In fact, these are gifts rather than bride price.

Although there is no bride price, properly speaking, the gifts have an important role.

"After the promise of marriage," says Vadier, "the future husband must come every year, after the filikienga /a feast/, to bring a few small gifts to the head of the family and to the girl's mother. These consist as a rule of a little millet, salt, a few hundred cowries, a mat, or two or three crudely made séko /coarse matting/.

"As for the father, he receives no gifts, which does not mean that he does not benefit from those received by his wife or by the head of the family.

"Likewise, the girl receives no gifts. Moreover, she may not utilize the commodities or foodstuffs given to her mother.

"The gifts offered during the long betrothal period cannot be of great value. A prospective husband who should bring 5, 000 or 6, 000

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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greeting a lower status benefactor, a man will get down and greet him from a kneeling position. It is because of this elaborate system of greeting, with the many opportunities thus provided for one person to slight another, that many important persons never go to the market. As a rule, the failure of any one person to give the required greeting to another when they meet in the market place is always an indication of strained relations between them.

The persons from whom an individual may buy goods, and the kinds of goods which may be purchased by one individual from another, are governed by convention and social relationships. A person may not buy anything from a relative except European goods. A man cannot buy any but cooked food in the market place, and often he asks a female relative or a passing female to buy it for him. To do the contrary is held to be unmanly and indicative of a bad character. A woman will not buy cotton cloth but will send a man to buy it for her. She would hate to have people believe that she has no male relative to weave it for her, or what is more likely, that she is too lazy to spin the cotton thread which would then be woven for her. A woman may purchase any type of commodity from other women, but she must be careful not to patronize men who are known to be libertines or with whom she is suspected of having an affair. She must also be careful about running errands for men, since people know that men often use this device to establish amorous relationships with women. Men also use this device to give presents, or to arrange secret meetings with them. If any man sees a female relative involved in any of these misadventures, he chases her away and more than likely curses the man, if he does not fight him. In any event, he warns the man to leave the woman alone.

The market is one of the few places where men and women can initiate relationships not sanctioned by their relatives. Under normal conditions marriages are arranged between unrelated individuals through the lineage members who establish "friendly" relationships. Two friends might ask their lineage heads for women to exchange as wives or the "friend" who has received more gifts from the other will give over a wife. Because the older men most often have goods and women at their disposal, they are usually the ones who receive wives. The result is that most young men have no wives, and until they inherit wives from lineage members, are continually seeking to establish intimate relations with women whom they meet on the market place. The technique which a young man employes to gain the favors of a woman he sees at market is highly stereotyped. First of all, he must ascertain that the woman in question is not a member of his maximal lineage or married to a member of his own lineage. A responsible